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SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY, DALLAS, TEXAS
ALL-UNIVERSITY CONVOCATION

BRIDGES EAST AND WEST

I am honored to be with you today at this great university in one of the nation's great cities. Like so much of our country, Dallas is a growing and changing community and the growth that is taking place here is healthy and sound and constructive.

As a citizen of a neighboring state, I am proud of the development of Southern Methodist University as one of the nation's leading institutions of learning and of the development of Dallas as one of the nation's handsomest and most prosperous communities. As a member of the Democratic Party, I am filled with admiration for the excellent judgment shown by the citizens of Dallas in last month's election. And as an American, I am proud of the efforts that have been made here in Dallas in the last year -- efforts that, in Mayor Jonsson's words, are building a community "balanced in human and spiritual values as well as economically."

It cannot truthfully be said that war is never profitable, but it can be said that its costs have almost always exceeded its rewards and that in our own time a general war would result in such mass destruction that, as President Kennedy once put it, the survivors would envy the dead. We have reached a point in history in which no rational man can conceive of war as a useful instrument of national policy. Unfortunately, however, men are not always rational and the fact that war is insanity does not mean that it is impossible or even unlikely.

It follows, I think, that one of the guiding principles of our foreign policy must be the accommodation of conflicting interests in the world by means other than military conflict. We should be under no illusions about the fact that accommodations without conflict mean a peace without victory, or at least without the kind of total victory for American ideals and values that was discussed so much in the recent election campaign. Great nations do not as a general rule surrender their interests and ideologies to other great nations without being compelled to do so. If it is agreed that neither the West nor the Communist nations are able to coerce the other into submission, then it should be clear to both sides that the condition of their survival is the acceptance by each of certain conditions and arrangements in the world that it will find distasteful. The challenge of statesmanship is to devise compromises that respect the vital interests of both sides while requiring concessions that, however distasteful, are at least tolerable.

I believe that we must pursue a policy of building bridges of accommodation with the Communist world, not because this approach is inherently more desirable than one of total victory for American interests but because there is no acceptable alternative in the nuclear age. The usefulness and desirability of a clear and quick victory over all our adversaries can be debated, but such a debate must be academic because the option of complete victory does not exist. The choice before us in our relations with the Communist world is not between victory and

defeat but between mutual accommodation and mutual annihilation. If there was ever a time in our history when it was open to us to seek a universal victory for American ideals and institutions -- and it may well be questioned that there was -- it is clear beyond doubt that that time has passed and that for as far into the future as we can see we shall be living in a world of diverse and often conflicting interests and ideologies.

I do not think there is reason for despair in this state of things. Compromises often turn out to be very much more tolerable than they seem when they are being made and victories even more often turn out to be bitter disappointments. There are two reasons, I think, why the fruits of triumph so often turn to ashes in the victor's hand.

The first is the inescapable limitations of human nature. Man is by far the most generously endowed of God's creatures, but for reasons known best to Himself, the Almighty endowed us liberally with technical and scientific skills but only modestly with the qualities of wisdom and farsightedness. A total victory is really too great a responsibility for any man or any nation. Men are simply not equipped to decide each other's fate, and when they try to do so, the chances are very great that, however good their intentions, the result will be something between tragedy and futility.

Democracy itself is built on this view of human nature. Democratic procedures are based on the assumption that no man has access to absolute truth and that no man, therefore, must be allowed to impose his will upon all others. The genius of democracy is that, unlike other political philosophies, it acknowledges the limits of human wisdom and understanding.

Viewed from the perspective of man's moral and intellectual shortcomings, the shattered hopes and lost victories of the recent past seem somewhat less surprising. A great deal of intellectual energy has been expended in an effort to understand how and why the victory of 1918 was followed in only twenty years by another global conflict and how and why the total victory of 1945 turned almost at once into the cold war that still engages us. These baleful events might well have been avoided, or at least alleviated, by different policies and different decisions at critical moments, but perhaps the basic cause of our disappointments lies in the very totality of the victories we won. Signaling as they did an opportunity to reshape the character of international relations, the victories of 1918 and 1945 were lost largely, I think, because they created opportunities that could only have been realized by the application of far greater wisdom and far greater vision than any of us possesses.

The second reason why great military triumphs so often fail to realize their promise lies in the character of conflict itself. War is not merely a method of resolving disputes that preceded it; it is not, as Clausewitz thought, a mere extension of politics. International conflicts, especially sustained international conflicts, have an evil dynamism of their own. The original causes of modern warfare are soon lost in a maelstrom of passion and destruction; new ambitions are aroused and new forces are released that change the character of the conflict and largely determine its outcome and aftermath.

Peace settlements in this age of national and ideological conflict are made by angry and agitated men. Nations are profoundly altered by conflict, and whatever their motives for entering a war, they are likely to come out of it embittered, vindictive and physically and morally exhausted, with far more extensive and far less realistic ambitions than those which drove them into war. Reason and wisdom are fragile human qualities, easily consumed in the passions of national conflict.

One of the tragedies of modern warfare -- perhaps the greatest tragedy -- is that it puts men most completely at the mercy of their emotions at precisely the moment when they are most desperately in need of their reason.

On November 29, 1917, the Daily Telegraph of London published a letter by Lord Lansdowne about the damage to be wrought by the war then in progress. His prophecy, which was scornfully rejected at the time but tragically vindicated in the outcome, is even more compelling for our own time. "We are going to win the war," he wrote, ". . . but its prolongation will spell the ruin of the civilized world, and an infinite addition to the load of human suffering which already weighs upon it. Security will be invaluable to a world which has the vitality to profit by it, but what will be the value of the blessings of peace to nations so exhausted that they can scarcely stretch out a hand with which to grasp them?" 1.

We Americans are more susceptible to excessive idealism than to vindictiveness. We have a tendency to turn conflicts for the defense of our interests into crusades for the regeneration of mankind. In 1917 we went to war to defend our maritime rights and ended by conducting a crusade to "make the world safe for democracy." In the Second World War we remained neutral while most of Europe and much of the Far East were overrun and entered the war only when our own territory was attacked, but then we prosecuted the war to the "unconditional surrender" of our enemies.

In both world wars we dreamed great dreams about a new era of world peace under world law. In both instances we were disappointed, largely, I believe, because our hopes soared beyond the limits of our capacity. In both instances, the price of unattainable aims was the loss of lesser prizes that were well within our grasp. I believe that America and the free world would be safer and happier today if we had not tried to outrun history in 1919 and again in 1945 and had tempered our idealism by combining it with more modest and traditional objectives. "The wicked are wicked, no doubt," wrote Thackery, "and they go astray and they fall, and they come by their deserts; but who can tell the mischief which the very virtuous do?" 2.

Every society has its shortcomings of style and character. Ours, I think, is the mischief of too great virtue, of idealism insufficiently tempered by the sobering wisdom of experience. It is this crusading tendency, so noble in intent, so potentially destructive in its consequences, that we must guard against in our relations with the Communist world.

The point that I wish to stress is that in this nuclear age we must learn to live in an imperfect world. We must scale our ideals to the limits of external reality and to the limits of our own capacity. We must recognize, in the words of the old maxim, that "the best is the enemy of the good." We must acknowledge, however regretfully, that it is not open to us to remove the threat of communism from the world but that it is open to us to build bridges to the Communist world and in so doing to influence the course which it follows in a direction compatible with our own safety and with the peace of the world.

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1. Lord Newton, Lord Lansdowne: A Biography (London: Macmillan, 1929), p.467.

2. William Thackery, The Newcomes, ch. 20.

The building of bridges is a modest and limited enterprise. In no sense is it to be taken as a harbinger of general reconciliation between the free world and the Communist world. Such a reconciliation is unlikely to occur in our lifetimes, not because we would not like it but because the differences are too great to be eliminated by any process more rapid than the evolution of history.

The building of bridges means nothing more than the opening of normal contacts and communications across a chasm of misunderstanding. It is most unlikely to result in the early resolution of such fundamental issues as the division of Germany, the nuclear arms race, and Chinese Communist aggression in the Far East. And, it should be emphasized, a program of limited accommodations with the Communist world can be only one part of the grand strategy of American national security. The other bases of our national security are the maintenance of the world's most powerful nuclear deterrent force and the maintenance and sustenance of a vigorous Atlantic Alliance. These, I think, are the three bedrocks of our security: none would be an adequate policy by itself and each contributes to the effectiveness of the other.

There is all but unanimous agreement among the American people on the need for military strength and the value of the Atlantic Alliance. It is on the third element of our national security policy -- the need for building bridges to the East-- that we often find ourselves divided. It is important to emphasize, therefore, that the purpose and effect of limited accommodations with Communist countries are exactly the same as those of our nuclear deterrent and of the Alliance: to reduce the Communist appetite for expansion and thereby to increase our own national security.

The key assumption of a policy of building bridges to the Communist world is that the Communist countries are susceptible to external influence and to internal change. I think the assumption is eminently sound. If the determination of the Communists to destroy us is indeed as permanent, monolithic and unalterable as some of our own people seem to believe, then they have achieved a constancy of will that no movement or nation or individual has ever before achieved.

It is nonsense to suppose that the character and objectives of communism are unalterable. Change and the susceptibility to change are practically a law of human life, and however much the Communists may imagine that they have altered or conquered human nature, it is a demonstrable fact that they have not. Even the dreariest of Chinese or Soviet fanatics is a human being as well as a Communist, subject to one degree or another -- however little he may like it -- to the same weaknesses, the same hopes and the same temptations that characterize all human life. In a way which the leaders of the Communist world would probably be the last to understand, they themselves as well as their peoples are connected with us by unalterable bonds of a common human nature. This common humanity can be a powerful and constructive instrument for change in the hands of those who understand it.

Great changes have in fact taken place and are continuing to take place in the Communist countries. On the whole there has been a tendency toward more liberal -- or less dictatorial -- domestic policies and more conservative -- or less aggressive -- foreign policies. Our policy should take close account of the nature and extent of these changes and of the diverse character of the world's Communist regimes. They range from China at one extreme, which hangs back in fanaticism and an aggressive foreign policy, to Yugoslavia at the other extreme, which has ceased to be a member of the bloc and pursues policies which are often friendly and seldom harmful to the West.

The Soviet Union stands approximately midway between the Chinese and Yugoslav extremes. During the period of Khrushchev's rule the apparatus of police terror was dismantled and after the great Cuban crisis of 1962 the regime adopted a policy of limited accommodations with the West. The new regime of Brezhnev and Kosygin has somewhat tempered the competition in insults with

China but otherwise seems to be maintaining the Khrushchev policy of "goulash" communism at home and generally prudent policies abroad.

The area of most rapid, although widely varying, change in the Communist world is Eastern Europe. Even aside from Yugoslavia, which is far in the vanguard and cannot be considered a member of the bloc, the winds of change are being felt in most of the states which we have considered satellites of the Soviet Union. Poland has enjoyed a considerable measure of independence in its internal affairs since Gomulka's successful defiance of Khrushchev in 1956. Hungary has progressed considerably since the brutal suppression of its revolution in 1956 and the Kadar regime has won a measure of public acceptance by raising living standards and tolerating limited popular liberties. Except for the release of some political prisoners, Rumania remains a Stalinist dictatorship in its internal life but has openly defied the Soviet Union in pursuing an independent foreign economic policy. Czechoslovakia, which until recently was one of the most compliant satellites, is now beginning to stir in its internal life. Only East Germany and Bulgaria remain Stalinist dictatorships almost wholly under Soviet domination, while backward Albania has broken with the Soviet Union and become a Chinese Communist satellite.

Far from the monolith of Stalin's time, the Communist bloc -- if it can still be called a bloc -- presents the world with a panoply of change proceeding at widely varying rates. This situation presents the West with interesting and important opportunities to influence events in the Communist world in a direction favorable to Western security and interests. As the Communist states become less like each other, they become more like the rest of the world, subject to traditional aims and ambitions, to traditional pressures of nationalism, and -- most important for our purposes -- to traditional forms of external influence.

A highly diversified situation calls for highly diversified policies. This, I think, must be the key consideration in the Western effort to build bridges to the Communist world. Our purpose is not simply to advance some vague purpose of greater international understanding but to influence the pace and character of change in the Communist world in such a way as to discourage aggressive and expansionist policies toward the free world. To do this, we must differentiate carefully between one Communist country and another, rewarding those which show a greater inclination to confine the practice of their ideology within their own frontiers and to enter into friendly relations with the West and withholding our rewards and, when necessary, applying sanctions against those which continue to pursue expansionist policies.

There can be no such thing, under current world conditions, as a single American policy toward communism or toward the Communist bloc. An appropriate policy toward Yugoslavia must be different in certain respects from our policies toward Poland or Hungary, substantially different from our policy toward the Soviet Union, and radically different from our policy toward Communist China.

Yugoslavia is a socialist state which permits its people considerable liberty, engages in experimental and pragmatic internal economic practices, and pursues a neutralist foreign policy which is free of Soviet control and not unfriendly to the West. Yugoslavia also exerts considerable influence on the Soviet bloc states of Eastern Europe, who admire Yugoslavia's progress and envy her independence.

These are compelling reasons for a friendly American policy toward Yugoslavia. Except for a few outstanding issues, our relations are in fact cordial and constructive. I visited Yugoslavia a few weeks ago to attend the signing of an educational exchange agreement and I am confident that the exchange of students and scholars will make for an even better understanding between the two countries.

From the point of view of our own national security, there are two important objectives to be served by a policy of friendly cooperation with Yugoslavia. The first is to strengthen Yugoslavia itself, with its sizable territory, developing economy, and substantial army, in the pursuit of its independent national policies. The second reason for good relations with Yugoslavia is its unique position as a bridge between East and West. When we engage in cordial political relations with the Yugoslavs and accord them most-favored-nation treatment in trade, we are demonstrating to the other Communist states of Eastern Europe in the most persuasive possible way that there are attractive rewards to be gained by the adoption of friendly policies toward the West.

Poland and Hungary represent a lower gradation in the evolution of Communist states. Poland, like Yugoslavia, receives most-favored-nation treatment in trade with the United States and is permitted to buy surplus food products under Public Law 480. Poland, however, has regressed somewhat in the last few years toward more passive acceptance of Soviet leadership and, for this reason, I would think that no new American iniatives are in order for the time being. As to Hungary, I think it is time for the United States to take cognizance of the Kadar regime's progress and internal liberalization by reestablishing the full diplomatic relations that were suspended at the time of the Revolution and perhaps as well by opening discussions for educational and cultural exchange.

Rumania has refused to subordinate its economy to an overall plan for the bloc and the United States, quite wisely, has encouraged this defiance by concluding a trade agreement with Rumania. As to the other countries of the bloc, they have not yet progressed to a degree that would warrant new American policies in trade or in other fields, and, indeed, just as independence is encouraged by rewarding those who practice it, it must also be encouraged by withholding concessions from those who do not.

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Twelve years ago the Eisenhower Administration came to power proclaiming a policy of "liberation" for Eastern Europe. That policy was a failure. When the workers of East Berlin rose in 1953 and again when the Hungarian people rebelled against their Communist rulers in 1956, the United States could not provide assistance beyond words of sympathy and concern. Despite the brave words of Secretary of State Dulles, the iron curtain was not "rolled back" in the 1950's except for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Austria, which was not accomplished by forcible liberation but by years of painstaking negotiations that finally produced the Austrian state treaty.

The "liberation" policy of the 1950's failed because it purported, in its ill-defined way, to roll back the iron curtain by forcible means of one sort or another. It therefore came up against the realities of the nuclear age. When Eisenhower and Dulles were put to the test of using force to realize their declared objective, they recognized, quite wisely, that no policy can be sustained when its likely result will be the nuclear incineration of the world.

The changes that have taken place in Eastern Europe in the last few years have opened a new and far more realistic possibility for its gradual liberation. That possibility lies in the policies which we are now pursuing and which can be built upon and expanded in the years ahead. Just as the Soviets have sometimes profited by infiltrating and dividing free nations, we now have an opportunity to influence events in the countries of Eastern Europe in a way that will promote their liberty and our security. The skillful use of trade and diplomacy and educational and cultural exchange can do far more to bring about the liberation of Eastern Europe than all the brave and hollow words that used to be uttered about "rolling back" the iron curtain.

It is not possible in a few words to outline a long-term policy for the Soviet Union. Broadly speaking, our Government has recognized -- and I hope will continue to recognize -- that the Soviet Union of Brezhnev and Kosygin is a markedly different country from the Russia of Stalin, posing the West with markedly different challenges and opportunities from those of twelve and even five years ago.

It is not to be expected that we will soon find it possible to build bridges to the Soviet Union comparable to those which can be built, say, to Yugoslavia or Poland or Hungary. The Soviet Union is second only to the United States in power and wealth, and it is the only nation in the world that poses a major military threat to the United States. Its policies are more moderate and more reasonable than they were a decade ago, and that is to be welcomed and encouraged. Unlike the nations of Eastern Europe, however, the Soviet Union has the power and the will to expand its influence whenever the opportunity arises. Accordingly, our policy toward the Soviet Union must be based somewhat less on measures of influence and accommodation and somewhat more on the other two major components of American security policy, the nuclear deterrent and the vitality of the Western Alliance.

The fact that the opportunities for building bridges are smaller in the case of the Soviet Union than they are in the case of Eastern Europe does not mean that they are unimportant. On the contrary, significant progress has been achieved and significant opportunities remain for limited accommodations between the Soviet Union and the

West. The partial nuclear test ban treaty, the agreement not to put nuclear weapons in orbit around the earth, the sale of American surplus wheat for gold, and the cultural exchange program have all contributed to an improvement in relations and to a substantial reduction in the danger of war.

I do not think that we will soon solve the problems of Berlin and of a divided Germany, and I am absolutely certain we will not soon achieve the "general and complete disarmament" that both sides are so fond of talking about. I do think, however, that useful opportunities will continue to arise in such fields as commerce and cultural relations, starting with a treaty for the establishment of consular relations that will be put before the Senate early in 1965. I believe that we should pursue these opportunities patiently and persistently because, modest as they are, their cumulative effect is the gradual lessening of the danger of war, which is not a modest achievement but a very significant one.

It is not really useful to argue over a "hard" policy versus a "soft" policy in our relations with the Soviet Union. Implicit in the eternal and fatuous debate between "hawks" and "doves" is the assumption that our policy must be based solely on military power or solely on compromise and conciliation. This is nonsense. A wise and farsighted policy is one which is "tough" in response to provocation, as in the case of the Cuban missile crisis, conciliatory in response to demonstrations of cooperative intent, as in the case of the test ban treaty, and unerring in its dedication to the peace and security of the free world.

The instruments of policy should not be confused with the goals of policy. The nuclear deterrent, the Western Alliance and measures of East-West accommodation are not ends in themselves but instruments of policy. The task of statesmen is not to choose one or another for all purposes and for all time but to decide in each instance which instrument of policy or what combination of policies is most likely to contribute to the security of the United States and of the free world.

The aims of our policy toward the Soviet Union are necessarily limited. They are limited because we are neither strong enough nor wise enough to eliminate all evil from the world and to bring about universal peace and justice. The issue between the Soviet Union and the West is not "Communism versus capitalism," but the universal and unlimited aims of Soviet policy. In the words of the French journalist and scholar Raymond Aron: "Should the Soviets ever recognize that their regime is only one of a number of possible ways of organizing industrial societies, the majority of democrats -- while continuing to regard certain practices of the Soviet regime as deplorable, inefficient or inhuman -- would no longer feel obliged to maintain an attitude of active hostility to the Soviet Union." 3.

China, with its ideological fanaticism, expansionist ambitions, and relentless hostility to the United States, poses a challenge of a different nature for American policy. It is to be hoped that in time, perhaps in ten or twenty years, the Chinese Communist leaders, like the Russians before them, will become somewhat less fanatic and somewhat more realistic in their view of the world. When they do -- if they do -- it will be wise and desirable to try to build bridges between China and the West. In the meantime we can make it clear that they can have peaceful and even cordial relations with the West whenever they abandon their policies of aggression and subversion.

Until they do, however, our policy must be one of containing Chinese power just as we contained the power of Stalinist Russia.

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3. Raymond Aron, "Coexistence: The End of Ideology," Partisan Review, Spring 1958, p. 230.

To put it another way, until China shows a far more cooperative disposition toward the free world, we shall have to base our policy on diplomatic, military and economic measures against Chinese Communist expansion, while withholding proposals for accommodation. Specifically, I think there is nothing to be gained at present either by according diplomatic recognition to Communist China or by acquiescing in its admission to the United Nations.

Wisely or not, we have withheld recognition and opposed Chinese Communist admission to the United Nations for fifteen years as expressions of our disapproval of their regime and its policies. Having withheld recognition as a mark of our disapproval, we cannot now accord it without having it taken as an expression of approval and acceptance. Since we do not and cannot approve of the present policies of the Chinese Communist regime, I do not think we should take a step which would convey the impression of approval, even though it should not have that effect. As to Chinese Communist membership in the United Nations, I think we must expect it sooner or later, but if it occurs before Communist China alters its present policies, I would expect the American vote to be cast in opposition.

There is little to be pleased with in the current situation in the Far East and little to be optimistic about in the prospects of an aggressive Communist China arming itself with nuclear weapons. But, as George Kennan wrote recently, ". . . we must not make the mistake of taking any of this as absolute and unchangeable. These, too, are only men. They once had mothers and childhood and affections. They are, today, what circumstances have made of them. It is circumstances which will determine what they, or their successors, will be in 10 or 20 years' time. . . . Neither these men in Peking nor the regime over which they preside are immune to the laws of change that govern all human society, if only because no single generation, anywhere, ever sees things exactly the same as the generation that went 10 years before it." 4.

These, I believe, are some of the ways in which bridges can be built between East and West. The purpose of these bridges is to open channels of communication across the chasm of misunderstanding that divides the human community and to break through some of the prevailing myths of international relations, of which the most dangerous is the belief that different political philosophies cannot survive together in the same world, that sooner or later one must prevail over all others.

Just as the medieval Christians could not bear the existence of heretical sects and alien religions, the extreme ideologues of our time have persuaded themselves that life is intolerable unless it is governed everywhere by uniform standards and values. This view is held as a kind of revealed truth, certainly not as an inference from history, which, far from suggesting that there is anything "natural" about uniformity in political ideas, leads us to the conclusion that if there is any "law" of historical development, it is a law of infinite variety, especially in men's ideas about their own nature and their relations with other men.

The crusading spirit is not a characteristic of mature societies but of unstable and politically primitive societies. The mature nation, like the mature man, is sure of its values in a way that welcomes but does not require imitation by others. The mature nation, like the mature man, is more interested in solving problems than in proving theories, more interested in helping people to be happy than in forcing them to be virtuous,

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4. George F. Kennan, "A Fresh Look at Our China Policy," New York Times Magazine, Nov. 22, 1964, p. 142.

and at least as interested in hearing the ideas of others -- and perhaps learning and benefitting from them -- as in preaching and spreading its own ideas.

I do not know whether the ideological and national animosities of our own time will erode away in the decades and centuries ahead. I do believe, however, that the lessons of the past offer grounds for hope that they will, if only we will let them. What is called for is a sense of historical perspective in meeting the crises and tensions of the moment -- a perspective from which we will perceive that the doctrines and the causes that arouse men to violence are transitory, that more often than not they fade into irrelevance with the erosion of time and circumstances. Only from such a perspective can we hope to build bridges that will stand -- bridges that will bring a divided world together in a reawakened awareness of its common humanity, in a reawakened understanding that the common hopes, common interests and common dangers that unite men are far more important than the ideologies that divide them.